

# FROM THE PASTOR: Respect All Life!

(from April 18, 2021 bulletin)

Recently, there was an article on abortion and personal responsibility that was brought to my attention after last week's (April 11th) bulletin had been sent to press. Moreover, there was a "correction" in last week's bulletin that, like the original article, was both imprecise and incomplete. The original statement concerning voting for pro-abortion candidates is clarified in a nuanced way in paragraphs #4—#11 below. The intention of the voter is of utmost importance in determining if a mortal sin (requiring confession) has been committed. The Church lays out her teaching but only God and the individual know how culpable the voter was in voting, therefore, no outside person can say whether the individual committed a mortal sin, all that can be said is that voting in support of a grave moral evil is mortally sinful. The correction in last week's bulletin was too narrow in focus and needed to be augmented by other paragraphs of the same document and other statements of Church teaching. I have included those needed statements below. ~ **Fr. Bruce, I.C., Pastor**

1. The Church teaches that there are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. Such actions are so deeply flawed that they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons. These are called "intrinsically evil" actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia (*USCCB Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*: **FCFC #22**). Other examples of intrinsically evil actions are: "assisted suicide, deliberately subjecting workers or the poor to subhuman living conditions, redefining marriage in ways that violate its essential meaning, or racist behavior (all) are intrinsically evil acts.
2. One distortion of the Church's defense of human life & dignity is: "a moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity. The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed." (FCFC #28)
3. St. John Paul II explained the importance of being true to fundamental Church teachings: "Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture—is false and illusory if *the right to life*, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination". (*Christifideles Laici*: **CF #38**)
4. The Vatican congregation for the Faith says: "It must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility toward the common good. (*Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, no. 4)
5. Catholic voters should use the framework of Catholic social teaching to examine candidates' positions on issues affecting human life and dignity as well as issues of justice and peace, and they should consider candidates' integrity, philosophy, and performance. It is important for all citizens "to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, (**LGOL**)# 33). (FCFC#41)

6. As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support. Yet if a candidate's position on a single issue promotes an intrinsically evil act, such as legal abortion, redefining marriage in a way that denies its essential meaning, or racist behavior, a voter may legitimately disqualify a candidate from receiving support. (FCFC #42)
7. A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who favors a policy promoting an intrinsically evil act, if the voter's intent is to support that position. In such cases, a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in grave evil. (FCFC) #34)
8. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care . . . If we understand the human person as the "temple of the Holy Spirit"-the living house of God-then these issues fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. *All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the house's foundation. (Living the Gospel of Life, no. 22)*
9. No public official, especially one claiming to be a faithful and serious Catholic, can responsibly advocate for or actively support direct attacks on innocent human life. [N]o appeal to policy, procedure, majority will or pluralism ever excuses a public official from defending life to the greatest extent possible. As is true of leaders in all walks of life, no political leader can evade accountability for his or her exercise of power (*Evangelium Vitae*, 73-4). Those who justify their inaction on the grounds that abortion is the law of the land need to recognize that there is a higher law, the law of God. No human law can validly contradict the Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." (LGOL #32)
10. There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position even on policies promoting an intrinsically evil act may reasonably decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons. Voting in this way would be permissible **only for truly grave moral reasons**, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil. (FCFC#35)
11. When all candidates hold a position that promotes an intrinsically evil act, the conscientious voter faces a dilemma. The voter may decide to take the extraordinary step of not voting for any candidate or, after careful deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods. In making these decisions, it is essential for Catholics to be guided by a well-formed conscience that recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight and that the moral obligation to oppose policies promoting intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions. These decisions should take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. In the end, this is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching. (FCFC #36-37)